

**Friis, John**

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**From:** Nancy Silander [NSILANDER@EOSmith.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 09, 2009 8:32 AM  
**To:** Friis, John  
**Cc:** Vijayasekar, Jaya  
**Subject:** S.B. 944 - Testimony

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Nancy Silander. I am a citizen of Connecticut for the past 30 years; my four children all went to public school from kindergarten through high school. I am also a French and Spanish teacher and head of the World Language Department at E. O. Smith High School in Storrs.

When I travel, I have always been proud to say I am a Connecticut teacher as our state is held in high regard for its education at both the elementary and secondary level, as well as at the university level. However, if Senate Bill 944 passes as it is currently structured, I will have a very difficult time justifying and being proud of Connecticut's education of its youngest citizens as being one that is keeping up with our changing world. Without including the modification proposed in S.B. 945 – the inclusion of two years of a world language – we are not, I repeat not, preparing our students for living in this century. It's as if we said you don't need any higher math than computation, or you only need to know two dates in American History. Many of our students will have opportunities to work and to live in countries other than the U.S.; probably the majority of our students will have co-workers whose first language is not English, and whose culture differs from what we like to think is "American" culture. Students who take a world language are given the skills for *learning* a language different from their own – even they would have a difficult time predicting which language might best serve them in the work they choose to do after high school, given that they will be changing jobs many times. Or, they will have a firm foundation to build on as they develop fluency in a particular language. They will also be more aware of cultural differences and how these enrich our country. As well, understanding cultural differences allows them to better interpret events world-wide, e.g. why you shouldn't call a car Nova in a Spanish-speaking country, or the importance of not staring in certain cultures, or not showing the bottom of one's foot. Do not deny our youngest citizens opportunities and education that will give us a better-informed citizenry by not including the study of a World Language in the high school curriculum. Do not let the excuses that the Department of Education gives of a lack of teachers and lack of strong programs at the elementary level (especially when these are some of the programs being cut in this budget crisis) deter you from ensuring that our students who graduate will be well-prepared to face the challenges of this century. Keep Connecticut in the forefront in educating its children and include world languages in the high school curriculum. Any other choice diminishes our state.

Thank you.